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Motivations for sympathy : character relationships in the works of Charles Dickens

Nicole Antonia Hales-Crotchett
San Jose State University

MOTIVATIONS FOR SYMPATHY:
CHARACTER RELATIONSHIPS
IN THE WORKS OF CHARLES DICKENS

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Nicole Antonia Hales-Crotchett

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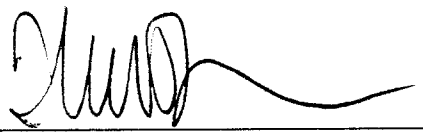

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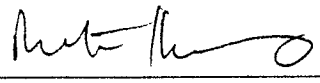

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ABSTRACT

MOTIVATIONS FOR SYMPATHY:
CHARACTER RELATIONSHIPS
IN THE WORKS OF CHARLES DICKENS

By Nicole Antonia Hales Crotchett

This thesis discusses Charles Dickens's portrayal of his characters and their motivations for relationships in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), *David Copperfield* (1850), and *Great Expectations* (1862).

Charles Dickens establishes a pattern for the success or failure of his character's relationships, and this pattern is based on the philosophies of Adam Smith. Throughout Charles Dickens's career he maintains the basic motivators of sympathy and curiosity being the prime indicators for the success or failure of each relationship, but adds new layers of complexity to each focus. These novels represent a cross section of his work, spanning his career.

DEDICATION

For Randy, my best friend.

sine qua non

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INTRODUCTION TO A PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

> That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it.
>
> — Adam Smith

The nineteenth century was a period of immense change and growth. In a time of huge transition and great uncertainty, what was once familiar had become strange. The shift from a land-based economy to a trade and manufacturing economy left the people of England awestruck by their world's changes.

In addition to the advances in technology, radical social change resulted from the Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867, restructuring the political face of England. The First Reform Act began a process of expanding voting rights. Prior to 1832, wealth and property ownership were used as the basis for voting privileges among English males. Rotten boroughs (districts with no residents) and pocket boroughs (districts whose tenant votes were owned by the wealthy landowners) helped to create a landed voting class that disenfranchised the rest. Included in changes

resulting from the first Reform Act of 1832 was the right of vote for all males owning property worth £10 or more in annual rent. Suddenly, men who never before had a say in government were granted a voice.

Property qualifications were gradually lowered allowing merchants and, later, professionals the right to vote. With the second Reform Act of 1837, property qualifications were eradicated and the vote was extended to most urban working men. By the end of the nineteenth century the balance of power had shifted from the rural countryside and landed gentry, to urban centers and a rising middle class.

This middle class sought an identity, and Charles Dickens was able to show them that it already existed. In the midst of sociopolitical changes in nineteenth-century England, Charles Dickens portrayed all classes of people. The rich, the poor, and the vast gulf between, were an inspiration for his characters, their interactions, and motives. Superficial relationships that form from people trying to use each other for personal gain simply do not succeed. However, when people are treated kindly and help is motivated by genuine interest for their well-being, successful relationships form that add stability to the

rapidly changing Victorian world. This study will focus on how Charles Dickens portrays his characters' motivations for interaction and the quality of relationships that develop.

The Victorians inherited a rich philosophy from Adam Smith (1723-90). His book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) presents a general system of morals whose theories advance the Enlightenment idea of a moral science consisting of political economy, law, and government. In brief, Smith theorizes that we have a natural sympathy that makes us interested in others, that our moral judgment is an expression of impartial sympathy, and that this sympathy develops into a natural law determining how we relate to others. If we experience a mutual understanding of passion or emotion, we experience sympathy.

Adam Smith greatly influenced the Victorians and his discussion of sentiment had far-reaching effects. Victorians attempting to come to grips with the drastic shift of power from rural countryside and landed gentry to urban centers and rising middle class welcomed Smith's philosophies. Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* gave this middle class a sense of responsibility for their fellow men, for their charges.

Selfish or altruistic motives are, in reality, rarely exclusive in individuals. Robert Frank, in his book *What Price the Moral High Ground?* (2004) writes:

> People are driven by a combination of selfish and altruistic motives. [. . .] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, expansive views about human nature almost invariably characterized writings about human behavior. (111)

And in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Smith writes:

> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages. (I.ii)

Sympathy for another does not necessarily rule out one's self interest.

Sympathy, according to Adam Smith, is our fellow feeling with the emotions of others. Questions of self-interest and altruistic motivation are less relevant when sympathy is part of the equation. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* he writes that one's

> sympathy with the person who feels those passions, exactly coincides with his concern for the person who is the object of them. (I.ii.IV.1)

If one person feels what another feels, then a sympathetic connection to the other's plight is made. When sympathy is

present, then he is likely to offer aid, assistance, or even honest friendship. These relationships, formed out of sympathy, succeed because there rarely is an ulterior motive. Concern for the other, genuine like, respect, or care establishes understanding, and forms a relationship where the consideration of the other outweighs the consideration of the self.

The relationships that form in absence of sympathy do not succeed over time. When one offers aid or assistance out of a selfish consideration, or offers friendship out of self-interest without regard for the other's needs, a successful reciprocal relationship does not form. With the primary motivation being self-interest, the focus shifts from the other to the self. If there is no sympathy and no fellow feeling, and if the relationship forms only out of curiosity, then the relationship will fail.

Smith's moral treatise found its way into Victorian popular culture. While Adam Smith's treatment of sentiment addresses moral emotional reactions, sentiment in literature refers to "the feeling or meaning intended to be conveyed by a passage, as distinguished from the mode of expression" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Sentiment had become a dominant theme throughout popular entertainment in

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was present in plays (e.g., *She Stoops to Conquer* 1773, *The School for Scandal* 1777, and nineteenth-century melodrama); journals (e.g., Goldsmith's *Bee*, MacKenzie's *Lounger*); poetry (e.g. Gray, Arnold, Wordsworth); and in the form that Charles Dickens knew and loved best: the eighteenth-century novel.

Dickens was well aware of the theme of sentiment, and quite possibly of Adam Smith's work. If he did not read Adam Smith directly, we do know that he read other authors who espoused Smith's theories, or who wrote on the general theme of sentiment. For example, one of Dickens's favorite poets was William Wordsworth, whose poetry has a recurring theme of sentiment. Dickens was also a great fan of the eighteenth-century novel, the foremost vehicle for sentimental attitudes. Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67), Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) — a book Dickens called "that most delightful of all stories" (Schlicke 524); these are all works with which Dickens was familiar, and all dealt with sentiment in one way or another. One can clearly see their presence in his work.

Walter Houghton, in *The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830 — 1870*, discusses the rise of sentimentality in

nineteenth-century art and literature. Artists and writers readily played on their audience's emotional reactions to their works. The "enjoyment of the tender emotions for their own sake" (276) became commonplace and common practice. So when Dickens creates a successful love story between Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness, or when we see Grandfather Trent's utter despair over Little Nell's death, not only does Dickens reinforce the emotions in sympathetic relationships, but his readers will experience that sentiment themselves. Dickens's works demonstrate the validity of Smith's observation that "Scarce a child can die without rending asunder the heart of somebody" (Smith VI.ii.I.3). The audience is willing to feel and experience these emotions along with the characters. "Dickens is a situational writer; it is all about the emotional situation" (Collins).

Adam Smith discusses this treatment of sentiment and the audience in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*:

> (The audience's) sympathy with the person who feels those passions, exactly coincides with his concern for the person who is the object of them. [. . .] (I)t is in depriving them of that friendship itself, in robbing them of each other's affections, it is in disturbing the harmony of their hearts, and putting an end to that happy commerce which had before subsisted between them. (I.ii.IV.1)

Without his sympathetic audience, and their vested interest in these characters, Charles Dickens is simply telling stories. But with the tie to the audience, "his characters do not so much re-create actual individuals as re-create our reactions to actual individuals" (Rosenberg 162). Dickens's work subtly focuses on how people relate to and help each other.

For clarity, definitions of the terms "sympathy" and "curiosity" are needed here. The *Oxford English Dictionary* includes the following in its definition of *sympathy*:

> The quality or state of being affected by the condition of another with a feeling similar or corresponding to that of the other; the fact or capacity of entering into or sharing the feelings of another or others; fellow-feeling. Also, a feeling or frame of mind evoked by and responsive to some external influence.
>
> The quality or state of being thus affected by the suffering or sorrow of another; a feeling of compassion or commiseration.

Adam Smith defines sympathy in *The Theory of Moral Sentiment* as

> [. . .] our fellow-feeling for the misery of others, [. . .] with any passion whatever. (I.i.I.3-5)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines curiosity as the following:

> The desire or inclination to know or learn about anything, esp. what is novel or strange; a feeling of interest leading one to inquire about anything.

The most appropriate and useful definition would be a reduction of these elements into concise terminology. *Sympathy* then, for this analysis, is:

> The quality or state of being affected by the suffering or sorrow of another. A feeling of compassion or commiseration.

Curiosity, then, is:

> The desire to know or learn about anything novel or strange.

These two elements, sympathy and curiosity, recur repeatedly as initial and primary motivators in relationships between characters throughout Charles Dickens's career.

Dickens creates a consistent pattern of behavior in his character pairings within the same framework Adam Smith presented in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments.* Simply, Dickens's characters offer assistance or form bonds motivated either by honest kindness, or simply out of a selfish interest motivated by fascination in the unusual or in the new and different. When sympathy motivates a character's initial action, reciprocity develops that

creates a lasting bond. However, when the relationship forms primarily out of one character's curiosity for another, that relationship will fail. Curiosity about the unusual and strange fades when the object becomes familiar, destroying those ties on which the relationship was based.

Dickens's characters have long been the subject of discussion by students, critics, and readers. As Brian Rosenberg wrote, Dickens's successful characterization is based on the contradictions and uncertainties used in the depiction of his figures. Ruth Vande Kieft, in her essay "Patterns of Communication in *Great Expectations*," contributes to the discussion of successful relationships. She begins by refuting the theory

> that to be successful or meaningful, humans must be strictly logical, and always accompanied with or expressed by a completely rational process of articulation. (325)

Her assertion is that conversation patterns, specifically her notion of successful communication, indicate more about the quality of a relationship than logical, rational communication does. She identifies successful communication as any time the "needs and intents of the human heart have been received by and conveyed to others" (334). Repeatedly, in works such as *David Copperfield* and

Great Expectations, we see communication patterns succeed or fail. If each individual's emotional needs and intents are met, then a successful pairing occurs. Most often, when the relationship is based on anything but mutual sympathy, no successful communication takes place.

Three primary novels from different periods of Charles Dickens's career illustrate this presentation of the motivations for character relationships. *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), *David Copperfield* (1850), and *Great Expectations* (1862) each have striking examples of both sympathy and curiosity as motivators in the relationships among characters, but each one is more sophisticated in its treatment than the last.

Dickens wrote *The Old Curiosity Shop* episodically, rarely much more than one number ahead.

> There is a lot of improvisation in his early work. Parts and details are set, but forget the whole. By 1843, he started to consider unity as a whole. (Collins)

He had the details set for the present number, since he had to direct his illustrators on what scenes to focus, but as a general whole, the story was fluid and very much a living document. *David Copperfield*, by contrast, had more structure to its planning, and much less improvisation.

The characters are more developed, and their relationships are more complex. The simple relationships in *The Old Curiosity Shop* become more detailed in *David Copperfield*.

When we reach his later career and the writing of *Great Expectations*, this complexity evolves even further. Events in Dickens's personal life subtly affected his writing and treatment of these character relationships. In 1857, Dickens meets Ellen Ternan, and in 1858 he separates from his wife. Much has been alleged over the years since, but one fact is clear:

> All novels after meeting Ellen Ternan deal with a disappointed lover; one who loved, but is not loved back. Read into Pip & Estella; he has more to say about love than before. Dickens writes of a passionate and frustrated love. (Collins)

The relationships in *David Copperfield* give way to much more conflicted and much more complex relationships in *Great Expectations*; yet the early motivations of sympathy and curiosity hold true.

Dickens weaves this pattern of sympathetic and curious relationships throughout in his novels. In his early work, the pairings are simple; one character helps another out of sympathy or out of curiosity. When based in sympathy, the bond succeeds and lasts; when based in curiosity, the bond

fails. As Dickens's career advances, complexities develop in his characterizations that make the relationships less clear-cut. The basic formula still exists, however; sympathy results in lasting bonds, while curiosity is simply a passing fancy.

CHAPTER 2: *THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP*

> It was curious, but not so pleasant, to turn from the beauty and grace of the girl, to the stooping figure, care-worn face, and jaded aspect of the old man.
>
> — The Single Gentleman

In *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-1), Charles Dickens presents memorable characters that inspire and evoke charged emotional responses from his audience. Throughout the story, as strangers and acquaintances offer assistance to those in need, relationships are formed out of either sympathy or curiosity. The majority of the relationships in this story are, in fact, motivated by curiosity; characters are attracted to each other purely by the novelty of their personalities or their appearances.

The two primary characters, Little Nell and Grandfather Trent, appear to others as being always in need. Grandfather Trent is an old man addicted to gambling, and Little Nell is a delicate child. In fact, it is Little Nell, not Grandfather Trent, who is the object of this focused attention since she is the most in need of assistance. Adam Smith anticipates Little Nell's

attractiveness to the Victorian audience and characters, stating that

> [a] child is a more important object than an old man; and excites a much more lively, as well as a much more universal sympathy. (*Moral Sentiments* VI.ii.I.3)

Those who assist Little Nell do so primarily out of their own curiosity rather than genuine concern for her well-being. Nell is strange and novel. She is referred to as "the child" more than 400 times in the story, where Kit is only "the boy" and Grandfather Trent is "the old man." Calling Nell "the child" carries with it emotional connotations; Dickens skillfully instills in his reader an unconscious desire to protect Little Nell, since a child generally cannot care for itself and must be protected. In addition to this well-chosen epithet, Little Nell is described as slight and beautiful in a world otherwise robustly ugly. Her initial physical description in Chapter 1, however, does not offer anything extraordinary:

> While we were sitting thus in silence, the door of the closet opened, and the child returned, her light brown hair hanging loose about her neck, and her face flushed with the haste she had made to rejoin us. (14)

While this brief portrait is unremarkable, every reference to her in the remainder of the chapter contains adjectives

and phrases that construct the image of Nell as a delicate, fair, bright creature.

Nell is good, deeply and wholly good. Her descriptions are angelic, which is compelling to the Victorian characters in this setting. Nell is constantly thrown into precarious situations where she either needs to ask explicitly for help, or she is observed in need and help is rendered. Curiosity for this figure motivates the majority, if not the entirety of these offers of assistance. From the Single Gentleman's offer to escort Nell through the night streets of London, to Mrs. Jarley's offers of sustenance, shelter, and employment, characters who find Nell and Grandfather Trent curious and compelling repeatedly offer assistance to them out of fascination, dooming the resulting relationships to failure.

Nell's first scene in the book is also her first entreaty for help. The Single Gentleman, our early narrator, is taking a late night walk and encounters Little Nell:

> I was arrested by an inquiry, [. . .] preferred in a soft sweet voice that struck me very pleasantly. I [. . .] found at my elbow a pretty little girl, who begged to be directed to a certain street at a considerable distance, and indeed in quite another quarter of the town. (11)

Nell responds to the Single Gentleman's questions "timidly" and Dickens writes that she is "afraid." We learn that initially Nell is comfortable on her own until she loses her way, and only then is she fearful. In Nell's first introduction to the audience, she is scared and desperate enough to ask a stranger for help. This "little creature" (12) puts her trust in the Single Gentleman and he helps Little Nell find her way.

Nell is "very small" with a "delicate frame" (12). She is "scantily attired" for being out alone at night, but "betrayed no marks of poverty or neglect" (12). When Nell suddenly realizes after their journey that they have arrived at her home, she "clap(s) her hands with pleasure" (13), a very child-like reaction. This certainly is not a child who should be alone at night on the streets of London. Yet the very fact that she is alone at night on these streets piques the reader's curiosity.

The Single Gentleman helps her out of curiosity. He takes her home where the audience gets their first full descriptions of Nell, Grandfather Trent, and the shop in which they live.

> The place [. . .] was one of those receptacles for old and curious things which seem to crouch in odd corners of this town and to hide their

> musty treasures from the public eye in jealousy and distrust. There were suits of mail standing like ghosts in armour here and there, fantastic carvings brought from monkish cloisters, rusty weapons of various kinds, distorted figures in china and wood and iron and ivory: tapestry and strange furniture that might have been designed in dreams. The haggard aspect of the little old man was wonderfully suited to the place; he might have groped among old churches and tombs and deserted houses and gathered all the spoils with his own hands. There was nothing in the whole collection but was in keeping with himself; nothing that looked older or more worn than he. (13)

The fact that this is Little Nell's home, as well as the title Dickens chose for this story, continues to add to the audience's curiosity about this child. Dickens stirs an interest, and captivates the reader with contrasts.

In the midst of this dreary scene, the narrator describes for us what we later learn is Little Nell's sleeping area:

> Preceding me with the light, he led me through the place I had already seen from without, into a small sitting-room behind, in which was another door opening into a kind of closet, where I saw a little bed that a fairy might have slept in, it looked so very small and was so prettily arranged. (14)

Nell's physical delicacy ("very small," "delicate frame," "little creature") in the midst of these curiosities provides a stark contrast. The juxtaposition of this

"pretty little girl" in a dark and dreary place full of "rusty" and "distorted figures" helps the audience accept that Nell, who in effect acts as her grandfather's caretaker, is in need of a caretaker herself.

The figure of Daniel Quilp, "Little Nell's cruel, lecherous persecutor," provides another stark contrast to this delicate child. "From his first entry into Dickens's novel, Quilp is depicted as deformed both inside and out" (Grant 2):

> The child was closely followed by an elderly man of remarkably hard features and forbidding aspect, and so low in stature as to be quite a dwarf, though his head and face were large enough for the body of a giant. His black eyes were restless, sly, and cunning; his mouth and chin, bristly with the stubble of a coarse hard beard; and his complexion was one of that kind which never looks clean or wholesome. But what added most to the grotesque expression of his face, was a ghastly smile, which, appearing to be the mere result of habit and to have no connexion with any mirthful or complacent feeling, constantly revealed the few discoloured fangs that were yet scattered in his mouth, and gave him the aspect of a panting dog.(29)

This grotesque man is a dangerous figure. Grandfather Trent owes him money and cannot pay. Quilp, while not ever forgetting this money, sets his sights on Nell. His unbridled lust sparks dread and fear in her, and adds to Grandfather Trent and Nell's desperate situation. The

contrast of Nell's purity and innocence, so out of place in her surroundings, sparks Quilp's self-interested lust.

At one end of the spectrum, we have delicate little Nell whom the audience loves and wants to protect. On the other end of the spectrum, we have grotesque Quilp whom the audience abhors and Nell fears. "Evil is excluded from Nell, good from the monstrous Quilp" (Grant 2). They are moral opposites.

Quilp establishes his lust for Little Nell early in the story. In Chapter 6, Nell has the task of bringing a letter to him at the counting house, and after studying her for a moment, Quilp propositions her:

> "You look very pretty to-day, Nelly, charmingly pretty. Are you tired Nelly?"
>
> "No, sir. I'm in a hurry to get back for he will be anxious while I am away."
>
> "There's no hurry, Little Nell, no hurry at all," said Quilp. "How should you like to be my number two, Nelly?"
>
> "To be what, Sir?"
>
> "My number two, Nelly, my second, my Mrs. Quilp. [. . .] To be my little cherry-cheeked, red-lipped wife."
>
> So far from being sustained and simulated by this delightful prospect, the child shrank from him in great agitation, and trembled violently. (53)

Later, the unexpected sight of Quilp in her home causes Nell to "(utter) a suppressed shriek on beholding this [. . .] figure [. . .]" (81).

Nell's agitation and fear arouses Quilp. He laughs when he sees her reaction at being asked to be the next Mrs. Quilp. After Nell's shriek and subsequent haste in leaving the room, he launches into a series of lecherous compliments detailing his lust for Nell, without regard for the pain he is causing her Grandfather:

> Quilp looked after her with an admiring leer, and when she had closed the door, fell to complimenting the old man upon her charms.
>
> "Such a fresh, blooming, modest little bud, neighbour," said Quilp, [. . .] "such a chubby, rosy, cosy, little Nell!"
>
> [. . .] "She's so," said Quilp, speaking very slowly, and feigning to be quite absorbed in the subject, "so small, so compact, so beautifully modelled, so fair, with such blue veins and such a transparent skin, and such little feet, and such winning ways —." (81)

Quilp has no sympathy for these people. His attraction to Nell is purely sexual. It is not her personality he desires; he wants to conquer her sexually and dominate her emotionally. There are two things he wants — his money and Little Nell — and he does not care what Nell and her Grandfather suffer.

Little Nell and Grandfather Trent flee the Curiosity Shop in an attempt to escape from Quilp and their troubles in London. While on the road, they encounter another figure of curiosity: they meet Mrs. Jarley and her caravan in Chapter 26 and establish a relationship. Mrs. Jarley happily attempts the role of caregiver, but curiosity, rather than true sympathy, is her underlying motivation.

When Mrs. Jarley first encounters Nell, she comments that she noticed Nell at the races (there is no scene in chapter 19 between them; we only have Mrs. Jarley's statement here). Mrs. Jarley has a sharp eye for the unusual and all things curious. As the proprietor of a wax works, she would need to maintain a sharp observational eye in order to keep her business current and to keep the interest of the public. That Mrs. Jarley noticed Nell at the races, undoubtedly a crowded and busy place, shows that Nell stood out, looking "quite out of her element" (209) and in chapter 47, Mrs. Jarley comments, "I knew she was not a common child" (358).

While traveling together in the caravan, Mrs. Jarley "sat looking at the child for a long time in silence" (207), studying her. She decides that Nell (and by default Grandfather Trent) should join Jarley's Wax Works.

> "What I want your grand-daughter for, is to point 'em out to the company; they would be soon learnt, and she has a way with her that people wouldn't think unpleasant." (210)

"What curious people you are!" (209) exclaims Mrs. Jarley, shortly before inviting the Trents to join her. Nell's appearance alone sparks Mrs. Jarley's interest; their life on the road only reinforces it.

In acquiring the child for her business, Mrs. Jarley adds Little Nell to the collection of novelties. Nell will become an exhibit along with the wax figures, attracting business.

> Unquestionably Mrs Jarley had an inventive genius. In the midst of the various devices for attracting visitors to the exhibition, little Nell was not forgotten. The light cart in which the Brigand usually made his perambulations being gaily dressed with flags and streamers, and the Brigand placed therein, contemplating the miniature of his beloved as usual, Nell was accommodated with a seat beside him, decorated with artificial flowers, and in this state and ceremony rode slowly through the town every morning, dispersing handbills from a basket, to the sound of drum and trumpet. The beauty of the child, coupled with her gentle and timid bearing, produced quite a sensation in the little country place. The Brigand, heretofore a source of exclusive interest in the streets, became a mere secondary consideration, and to be important only as a part of the show of which she was the chief attraction. Grown-up folks began to be interested in the bright-eyed girl, and some score of little boys fell desperately in love, and constantly left enclosures of nuts and

> apples, directed in small-text, at the wax-work door.
>
> This desirable impression was not lost on Mrs Jarley, who, lest Nell should become too cheap, soon sent the Brigand out alone again, and kept her in the exhibition room, where she described the figures every half-hour to the great satisfaction of admiring audiences. (221)

Nell has become a curiosity: she is dressed up like a wax-work figure and put on display throughout the town. When Mrs. Jarley brings Nell inside to show the figures, she becomes an exhibit.

Nell discovers in Chapter 42 that Grandfather Trent plans to rob the wax works in order to pay off a gambling debt. Rather than try to stay and find a solution, her instinct is to flee:

> The first idea that flashed upon her mind was flight, instant flight; dragging him from that place, and rather dying of want upon the roadside, than ever exposing him again to such terrible temptations. (323)

Nell's concern is not for Mrs. Jarley at all; her concern is only for her grandfather. She stops to consider Mrs. Jarley at one point, but rather than a thought for her well-being, she worries about temptation and trouble for her grandfather:

> she was distracted with a horrible fear that he might be committing it at that moment; with a

> dread of hearing shrieks and cries piercing the silence of the night; with fearful thoughts of what he might be tempted and led on to do, if he were detected in the act, and had but a woman to struggle with. It was impossible to bear such torture. She stole to the room where the money was, opened the door, and looked in. God be praised! He was not there, and she was sleeping soundly. (323)

When Nell rouses her grandfather from his sleep and invents the tale of a nightmare, she focuses on the agent of the crime, not the target. This perspective is not divergent from her actual concerns; she worries about the crime and the perpetrator, not about the potential victim:

> "I have had a dreadful dream," said the child, with an energy that nothing but such terrors could have inspired. "A dreadful, horrible dream. I have had it once before. It is a dream of grey-haired men like you, in darkened rooms by night, robbing sleepers of their gold. Up, up! [. . .] I cannot sleep, I cannot stay here, I cannot leave you alone under the roof where such dreams come. Up! We must fly." (324)

"Nothing but flight can save us" (324) cries Little Nell, focused still on their well-being instead of the well-being of Mrs. Jarley.

> Through the strait streets, and narrow crooked outskirts, their trembling feet passed quickly. Up the steep hill too, crowned by the old grey castle, they toiled with rapid steps, and had not once looked behind. (324)

Nell does not stop to consider how Mrs. Jarley will react to their absence. She does not worry about their friendship, or Mrs. Jarley's feelings. Nell never once developed a true sympathetic relationship with Mrs. Jarley, because her concerns of her own fate and that of her grandfather's superseded any sympathy or fellow feeling she would have developed.

> At any other time, the recollection of having deserted the friend who had shown them so much homely kindness, without a word of justification——the thought that they were guilty, in appearance, of treachery and ingratitude—even the having parted from the two sisters—would have filled her with sorrow and regret. But now, all other considerations were lost in the new uncertainties and anxieties of their wild and wandering life; and the very desperation of their condition roused and stimulated her. (325)

It was curiosity, not true concern, which formed their relationship. As such, this relationship could not survive.

Little Nell eventually finds sympathy in the people of the village where she takes her final refuge. However, no amount of sympathy and true compassion can save her. Sympathy is a natural occurrence in Dickens's world, but it is not a common one. Curiosity, as a base level reaction, is much more common. Few characters move above curiosity

and into real sympathy when looking outside of themselves. Although Nell does experience some true sympathy in her life, her release is in death.

The deaths of Little Nell and of Quilp occur almost simultaneously in the story (the descriptions of each death are four chapters apart). Nell's death is peaceful; the impression is that she died in her sleep; and the news is reported with the simple phrase "for she was dead" (538). Quilp's death, however, is a violent struggle.

> Nell slips into a death that seems more like birth. Quilp, on the other hand, locks himself away from all possible aid, loses his footing, and drowns miserably in the Thames. (Grant 2).

Quilp's death is a just response to his actions and life. For Quilp, death is a torment. For Nell, it is a release. Her only option was to die, thus ending her tormented journey. The peace of Nell's death ensures that the reader will forever sympathize with her, while the spectacle of Quilp's death secures a position of loathing for a curiously grotesque and vile figure.

The least frequently demonstrated, but most successful and lasting type of relationship in this novel is based on genuine sympathy and concern. An obvious example is the relationship between Nell and Grandfather Trent.

Everything she does is for his well-being; she loves him dearly. Conversely, Grandfather Trent truly loves Nell. Although his actions are not always pure and good (e.g., he steals money from her in chapter 30 to feed his gambling addiction), his entire motivation, no matter how misplaced his actions, is for Nell's happiness. Early in the story, at the end of Chapter 3, Grandfather Trent sets the stage for all of his actions, those which have already occurred in the story, and those which will play out. He tells the narrator, our single gentleman:

> "All is for her sake. I have borne great poverty myself, and would spare her the sufferings that poverty carries with it. I would spare her the miseries that brought her mother, my own dear child, to an early grave. I would leave her — not with resources which could be easily spent or squandered away, but with what would place her beyond the reach of want for ever. You mark me sir? She shall have no pittance, but a fortune — ." (34)

Grandfather Trent truly loves Nell. He is more than sympathetic to her needs; he has placed her future above his present. While he never accomplishes his goal of wealth for Nell, theirs is a genuine love. Their motivations are for each other's well being.

Kit Nubbles is another example of a character with true sympathy for others. He cares for Nell and

Grandfather Trent out of a real interest in their well-being, even after Grandfather Trent accuses him of betrayal. Kit continues to look after them while they are still in London, in spite of being wrongly fired in Chapter 10. Kit's friendship with Nell and his earnest desire to protect her offers Nell peace of mind. He is unable to save her, but this does not keep him from trying. Their sympathy and compassion for each other never wavers.

The best example of a sympathy-based relationship is of Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness. As Eileen Cleere discussed in her paper on the nature of misanthropy and philanthropy, Dick Swiveller's curiosity in this "half-starved servant child" results in more good than any other relationship in this story. What begins here as assistance based on curiosity, develops into a lasting relationship of mutual sympathy, and ultimately into love. As G.K. Chesterton put it, Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness "build up between them a true romance; perhaps the one true romance in the whole of Dickens."

The Marchioness is certainly a sympathetic character. The relationship she has with Sally Brass, her mother, employer, and tormentor, stirs sympathy from the audience. The most vibrant scene between Sally Brass and the

Marchioness occurs in chapter 36 and it is witnessed by Dick Swiveller. The audience sees the conditions in which the Marchioness lives, and the abuse Sally Brass heaps on her illegitimate daughter:

> It was a very dark miserable place, very low and very damp: the walls disfigured by a thousand rents and blotches. The water was trickling out of a leaky butt, and a most wretched cat was lapping up the drops with the sickly eagerness of starvation. The grate, which was a wide one, was wound and screwed up tight, so as to hold no more than a little thin sandwich of fire. Everything was locked up; the coal-cellar, the candle-box, the salt-box, the meat-safe, were all padlocked. There was nothing that a beetle could have lunched upon. The pinched and meagre aspect of the place would have killed a chameleon. He would have known, at the first mouthful, that the air was not eatable, and must have given up the ghost in despair. The small servant stood with humility in presence of Miss Sally, and hung her head.
>
> [. . .] "Go further away from the leg of mutton, or you'll be picking it, I know," said Miss Sally.
>
> The girl withdrew into a corner, while Miss Brass took a key from her pocket, and opening the safe, brought from it a dreary waste of cold potatoes, looking as eatable as Stonehenge. This she placed before the small servant, ordering her to sit down before it, and then, taking up a great carving-knife, made a mighty show of sharpening it upon the carving-fork.
>
> "Do you see this?" said Miss Brass, slicing off about two square inches of cold mutton, after all this preparation, and holding it out on the point of the fork.

> The small servant looked hard enough at it with her hungry eyes to see every shred of it, small as it was, and answered, "yes."
>
> "Then don't you ever go and say," retorted Miss Sally, "that you hadn't meat here. There, eat it up."
>
> This was soon done. "Now, do you want any more?" said Miss Sally.
>
> The hungry creature answered with a faint "No." They were evidently going through an established form.
>
> "You've been helped once to meat," said Miss Brass, summing up the facts; "you have had as much as you can eat, you're asked if you want any more, and you answer, "no!" Then don't you ever go and say you were allowanced, mind that." (277-8)

This "established form" (277) between Sally Brass and the Marchioness illustrates a pattern of intimidation, psychological abuse, and domination. This is certainly not what one would expect when witnessing the interaction between a parent and child. Of course, Dick is not aware of this biological connection, and at this point, neither is the audience. But as Michael Steig points out in his chapter "From Caricature to Progress," Dickens had this biological relationship in mind when directing the accompanying illustrations, "for there is a definite resemblance between the faces of Sally and the 'small

servant,' in the latter's first appearance (in the cut showing them outside the Single Gentleman's door)" (3). Even though Dickens does not explicitly spell it out in the text, the audience instinctively makes this connection and sympathizes even more with the Marchioness.

> It was plain that some extraordinary grudge was working in Miss Brass's gentle breast, and that it was that which impelled her, without the smallest present cause, to rap the child with the blade of the knife, now on her hand, now on her head, and now on her back, as if she found it quite impossible to stand so close to her without administering a few slight knocks. But Mr Swiveller was not a little surprised to see his fellow-clerk, after walking slowly backwards towards the door, as if she were trying to withdraw herself from the room but could not accomplish it, dart suddenly forward, and falling on the small servant give her some hard blows with her clenched hand. The victim cried, but in a subdued manner as if she feared to raise her voice, and Miss Sally, comforting herself with a pinch of snuff, ascended the stairs, just as Richard had safely reached the office. (278)

Adam Smith states in *The Theory of Moral Sentiment* that the sympathy of a parent for her child is generally an "active principle" that outshines other sympathetic pairings:

> The existence of the child [. . .] depends altogether upon the care of the parent. (VI.ii.I.3)

In this case, however, there is no sympathy and no compassion for the Marchioness by Sally Brass. Not only is

there no recognition of maternity, there is an established behavior of contempt and abuse. This abuse leaves the Marchioness quite timid and fearful in nature. She has never felt sympathy.

Dick Swiveller's first direct interaction with Marchioness is in Chapter 34. Believing himself to be at work alone one day, he is startled when his office door opens.

> Dick leant over the table, and descried a small slipshod girl in a dirty coarse apron and bib, which left nothing of her visible but her face and feet. She might as well have been dressed in a violin-case.
>
> [. . .] There never was such an old-fashioned child in her looks and manner. She must have been at work from her cradle. She seemed as much afraid of Dick, as Dick was amazed at her.
>
> [. . .] "This is a queer sort of thing, "muttered Dick, rising. "What do you mean to say you are —the cook?"
>
> "Yes, I do plain cooking;' replied the child. "I'm housemaid too; I do all the work of the house." (261)

She begs for his assistance and entreats him to show the room upstairs at the Brass's to a prospective tenant. Her motivation is self-preservation since she wants to avoid angering Sally Brass. Dick agrees to help her out of initial curiosity; he has no vested interest in this young

girl but finds her sudden emergence, as well as her physical appearance, quite startling.

Dick's curiosity returns in Chapter 36 as his thoughts turn to the Marchioness.

> One circumstance troubled Mr. Swiveller's mind very much, and that was that the small servant always remained somewhere in the bowels of the earth under Bevis Marks, and never came to the surface unless the single gentleman rang his bell, when she would answer it and immediately disappear again. She never went out, or came into the office, or had a clean face, or took off the coarse apron, or looked out of any one of the windows, or stood at the street-door for a breath of air, or had any rest or enjoyment whatever. Nobody ever came to see her, nobody spoke of her, nobody cared about her. Mr Brass had said once, that he believed she was a "love-child" (which means anything but a child of love), and that was all the information Richard Swiveller could obtain. (276)

But this is more than idle curiosity; he begins to wonder for her as a matter of concern. "I don't believe that small servant ever has anything to eat," he thinks one day when Sally Brass mentions that she is going out for dinner:

> "I'd give something — if I had it — to know how they use that child, and where they keep her." [. . .] "(U)pon my word," said Mr. Swiveller, checking himself and falling thoughtfully into the client's chair, "I should like to know how they use her!" (276)

Time passes, and Dick comes to finds himself alone in the office often. To amuse himself he begins to play solo games of cribbage:

> As these games were very silently conducted, notwithstanding the magnitude of the interests involved, Mr Swiveller began to think that on those evenings when Mr and Miss Brass were out (and they often went out now) he heard a kind of snorting or hard-breathing sound in the direction of the door, which it occurred to him, after some reflection, must proceed from the small servant, who always had a cold from damp living. Looking intently that way one night, he plainly distinguished an eye gleaming and glistening at the keyhole; and having now no doubt that his suspicions were correct, he stole softly to the door, and pounced upon her before she was aware of his approach.
>
> "Oh! I didn't mean any harm indeed, upon my word I didn't," cried the small servant, struggling like a much larger one. "It's so very dull, down-stairs, Please don't you tell upon me, please don't."
>
> "Tell upon you!" said Dick. "Do you mean to say you were looking through the keyhole for company?"
>
> "Yes, upon my word I was," replied the small servant.
>
> "How long have you been cooling your eye there?" said Dick.
>
> "Oh ever since you first began to play them cards, and long before."

> [. . .] "Well — come in" — he said, after a little consideration. "Here — sit down, and I'll teach you how to play."
>
> "Oh! I durstn't do it," rejoined the small servant; "Miss Sally 'ud kill me, if she know'd I come up here." (432)

To solve that dilemma, Dick reasons that since he is allowed to go where he wishes in the house he can come down to her quarters, the kitchen. He orders food and beer for them both to be brought, and engages her in a pleasant evening.

As he drinks his beer, he studies her for a moment. From that point, Dickens begins to refer to her as "his companion" (432). Dick's motivation is no longer curiosity, but simple kindness. His care for her is of one human being for another, and he christens her "the Marchioness" (432). Now in possession of a name she spends a lovely evening being treated, for once, as a person.

She repays this kindness. When Dick takes ill in Chapter 64, it is the Marchioness, in their third scene together, who becomes his caregiver. She comes to his sickbed and takes care of him unbidden, and looks after him for three weeks:

> The same room certainly, and still by candlelight; but with what unbounded astonishment

> did he see all those bottles, and basins, and articles of linen airing by the fire, and such-like furniture of a sick chamber — all very clean and neat, but all quite different from anything he had left there, when he went to bed! The atmosphere, too, filled with a cool smell of herbs and vinegar; the floor newly sprinkled; the — the what? The Marchioness? (476)

Her motivation is simple: to take care of Dick. She is concerned for his health and well-being. The Marchioness truly sympathizes with him, and puts his needs first:

> "Why, you see," returned the Marchioness, "when you was gone, I hadn't any friend at all, because the lodger he never come back, and I didn't know where either him or you was to be found, you know. But one morning, when I was-"
>
> "Was near a keyhole?" suggested Mr Swiveller, observing that she faltered.
>
> "Well then," said the small servant, nodding; "when I was near the office keyhole — as you see me through, you know — I heard somebody saying that she lived here, and was the lady whose house you lodged at, and that you was took very bad, and wouldn't nobody come and take care of you. Mr Brass, he says, 'It's no business of mine,' he says; and Miss Sally, she says, 'He's a funny chap, but it's no business of mine;' and the lady went away, and slammed the door to, when she went out, I can tell you. So I run away that night, and come here, and told 'em you was my brother, and they believed me, and I've been here ever since." (480)

The care she gives Dick is inspired by the simple human kindness he showed her over the cribbage board. This

reciprocal kindness has no curiosity attached to it; it comes from the heart.

The relationship between Dick and the Marchioness develops into true mutual sympathy and a lasting bond. Dick has someone to care for and someone to care for him:

> "Sir," said Dick, sobbing and laughing together, "you may. For, please God, we'll make a scholar of the poor Marchioness yet! And she shall walk in silk attire, and siller have to spare, or may I never rise from this bed again!" (504)

Their relationship is based on mutual concern and interest, not on a passing fancy. These two characters undergo significant growth and change throughout the novel. At the beginning of the story, Dick Swiveller is a drunken, singing dandy whose only interest is in the pleasure of the moment. He transforms into a man who quite easily places the needs of another before his, making her happiness and success his primary goal. The Marchioness transforms not only in name (from the small servant, to The Marchioness, and finally to Sophronia Sphynx), but she transforms in intellect, stature, and confidence. Their union succeeds because it is based in mutual sympathy; their mutual sympathy blossoms into love.

The position most characters assume as caregiver in Nell's relationships, being based on an interest in the novel strangeness of perfect, angelic, pure Little Nell, fades when fancy turns to the next curiosity. When Nell needs help the most, the only person truly in a position to help is her ineffectual Grandfather. Any number of characters from this story missed several opportunities to help, but there was no real sympathy; their curiosity overpowered all. This early treatment of the motivators sympathy and curiosity clearly reflect Adam Smith's theories of moral sentiment. Dickens plays an even hand with his characters and portrays them with relatively few complications.

CHAPTER 3: *DAVID COPPERFIELD*

> I was thinking of all that had been said. My mind was still running on some of the expressions used. "There can be no disparity in marriage like unsuitability of mind and purpose." "The first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart." "My love was founded on a rock." But we were at home; and the trodden leaves were lying under-foot, and the autumn wind was blowing.
>
> — David Copperfield

As Charles Dickens moved into the middle of his career, his writing noticeably matured. No longer writing just ahead of publication, he found his plot lines, and characters, grew more intricate as he spent more time planning and developing his weekly numbers. In *David Copperfield* (1849-50), more complex sympathetic connections evolve than we read in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. A major difference between these two works is the nature of the relationships formed between characters. *The Old Curiosity Shop* is a blend of a wild adventure for Nell and her Grandfather as we follow them from one adventure to the next, and general drama for the stationary characters. The relationships between characters consist of assistance being sought by, or offered to those who are in need, as

this is a major element of the plot. In *David Copperfield*, by contrast, the plot is less episodic and there is more time to develop relationships. Instead of angelic Little Nell running from threat to threat in a desperate attempt to save her grandfather, we have a first-person narrative of the life of the title character. This work devotes more time and detail to developing relationships beyond the initial impulse. As a result, these character pairings are more intricate and less fleeting. We have the opportunity to focus on a number of significant characters and how they form their relationships. One constant remains: when the relationships are not mutually sympathetic, the relationships are unsuccessful.

James Steerforth is a significant character who has a great influence on the young David Copperfield. He is a privileged young man who is accustomed to getting what he wants.

> There was one boy - a certain J. Steerforth - who cut his name very deep and very often, who, I conceived, would read it in a rather strong voice, and afterwards pull my hair. (82)

This characterization of an unmet boy has basis only in David's initial trepidation at meeting his classmates, stemming from his fear of the unknown. He expects the

worst, but when he meets the boys his fears are somewhat assuaged; they are good-natured and accept him. And yet,

> I was not considered as being formally received into the school, however, until J. Steerforth arrived. Before this boy, who was reputed to be a great scholar, and was very good-looking, and at least half-a-dozen years my senior, I was carried as before a magistrate. He inquired, under a shed in the playground, into the particulars of my punishment, and was pleased to express his opinion that it was "a jolly shame"; for which I became bound to him ever afterwards. (87)

This initial meeting is a sympathetic moment and young David is encouraged.

Steerforth comes to treat David as a pet or a mascot. Years later, Steerforth's mother describes to David her son's perspective on their relationship:

> "Indeed, I recollect his speaking, at that time, of a pupil younger than himself who had taken his fancy there; but your name, as you may suppose, has not lived in my memory." (278-9)

David is an object of initial curiosity, and their relationship, at least to Steerforth, never develops beyond this. David is quick to accept Steerforth's friendship, even when he has misgivings at handing over his money, or has discomfort staying up late to tell stories for Steerforth's amusement.

> I was moved by no interested or selfish motive, nor was I moved by fear of him. I admired and loved him, and his approval was return enough. It was so precious to me that I look back on these trifles, now, with an aching heart. (94)

David has seen so little kindness in his life that he mistakes this for true friendship. Any act that is not an act of meanness is welcome and cause for thanks.

Later in life, David muses about their friendship:

> A dashing way he had of treating me like a plaything, was more agreeable to me than any behaviour he could have adopted. It reminded me of our old acquaintance; it seemed the natural sequel of it; it showed me that he was unchanged; it relieved me of any uneasiness I might have felt, in comparing my merits with his, and measuring my claims upon his friendship by any equal standard; above all, it was a familiar, unrestrained, affectionate demeanour that he used towards no one else. As he had treated me at school differently from all the rest, I joyfully believed that he treated me in life unlike any other friend he had. I believed that I was nearer to his heart than any other friend, and my own heart warmed with attachment to him. (263)

To David, James Steerforth is a true and valued friend. David gratefully accepts the acts of perceived kindness when they were in school together at Mr. Creakle's. He builds Steerforth up so much in his mind and very nearly begins to worship him, which naturally pleases and amuses Steerforth. Their friendship is mutually beneficial —

David receives a protector and Steerforth receives adoration--yet it is not mutually sympathetic.

Dickens reveals Steerforth's character in several places. In chapter 6, we learn that Mr. Creakle, while free to beat the other students, does not dare lay a hand on Steerforth. The audience is not precisely informed why, but it is clear that he is protected because of his class. In chapter 7, Steerforth humiliates Mr. Mell and in the act betrays David's confidence, showing that Steerforth valued his own desires far more than the needs of his supposed friend. In chapter 20, while David is dining with Steerforth and his family, David mentions that he plans to visit the Peggotty family in Suffolk. At school, David introduced his friend to Ham and Mr. Peggotty, and Steerforth is respectful when he meets them. When David mentions them again over dinner, Steerforth is condescending to that class of people.

> "Oh! That bluff fellow!" said Steerforth. "He had a son with him, hadn't he?"
>
> "No. That was his nephew," I replied; "whom he adopted, though, as a son. He has a very pretty little niece too, whom he adopted as a daughter. In short, his house - or rather his boat, for he lives in one, on dry land - is full of people who are objects of his generosity and kindness. You would be delighted to see that household."

> "Should I?" said Steerforth. "Well, I think I should. I must see what can be done. It would be worth a journey (not to mention the pleasure of a journey with you, Daisy), to see that sort of people together, and to make one of 'em." (276-7)

Rosa Dartle jumps in at the use of this tone, and question what Steerforth implies. To clarify, he explains:

> "Why, there's a pretty wide separation between them and us," said Steerforth, with indifference. "They are not to be expected to be as sensitive as we are. Their delicacy is not to be shocked, or hurt easily. They are wonderfully virtuous, I dare say - some people contend for that, at least; and I am sure I don't want to contradict them - but they have not very fine natures, and they may be thankful that, like their coarse rough skins, they are not easily wounded." (277)

While David hopes that his friend is speaking in jest, it is clear that he is not. James describes Yarmouth, when they arrive, as a "queer, out-of-the-way kind of hole" (283) and begins to act as if this visit is a sport.

> "It's no fun," said Steerforth, "unless we take them by surprise. Let us see the natives in their aboriginal condition." (284)

The textual note to the Penguin edition reveals that the term aboriginal "carries the late-eighteenth-century and imperialist meaning of 'earlier than European colonists'" (866). Steerforth's comments reveal his attitude of superiority to anyone below his social class.

Steerforth's mood is light, and the audience senses that he is making a game of the Peggotty family from the start. He goes to see the "natives in their original condition" (284) and exhibits no respect for them as people. David, in fact, characterizes Steerforth as becoming merrier as they got closer to Yarmouth, as if in growing excitement at the prospect of a new adventure. When they advance toward Mr. Peggotty's home, Steerforth's mood lightens even more:

> He maintained all his delightful qualities to the last, until we started forth, at eight o'clock, for Mr. Peggotty's boat. Indeed, they were more and more brightly exhibited as the hours went on [. . .]. If anyone had told me, then, that all this was a brilliant game, played for the excitement of the moment, for the employment of high spirits, in the thoughtless love of superiority, in a mere wasteful careless course of winning what was worthless to him, and next minute thrown away - I say, if anyone had told me such a lie that night, I wonder in what manner of receiving it my indignation would have found a vent! (291)

And yet it was all a sport to Steerforth, proof to him that he is superior.

Steerforth gaily meets the Peggotty family and is immediately taken with Little Emily, and she is taken with him. In every scene between them, or in every reference to the pair, Dickens only presents motivations of physical

attraction for their relationship. There is no mutual development beyond the physical, and hence no basis for success.

Steerforth's elopement with Emily Peggotty is really the culmination of this game; he wins and proves that he is superior and could have anything or anyone he wanted. Emily tells Rosa Dartle later in the story that in fact she did fall in love with him, but the story reveals that these feelings are certainly not mutual. They live together abroad for a time, but Emily's sadness at the separation from her family darkens her moods. According to Littmer in chapter 46, Steerforth loses interest in Emily when her moods become more frequent, and he leaves periodically for days at a time. At the end of this game, Steerforth offers Emily to Littmer so she would have a respectable life (so he says), yet his motive is to assuage his guilt, not to do the right thing.

Steerforth lives his life without thought for anyone else unless the thought is attached to his own guilt or pleasure. His inability to form mutually sympathetic relationships with the people in his life leaves him with nothing. Dickens does not allow James Steerforth to live, much as he did not allow Quilp to live. The final

struggles and ultimate drowning of both of these characters suits the manner in which they lived their lives: one recklessly, and one ruthlessly.

Betsey Trotwood, David's aunt, is another significant character to this story. She is present the night David is born, gives him a home when he has none, and becomes his trusted family. Betsey's first appearance in the novel is her arrival at the Rookery the night of David's birth. Aunt Betsey's reputation precedes her as she appears up the garden walk and peers through the window. She is a "strange lady" who comes "walking up to the door with a fell rigidity of figure and composure of countenance that could have belonged to nobody else." Commanding entrance to the home, "she made a frown and a gesture, [. . .] like one who was accustomed to be obeyed, to come and open the door" (13-4). Later, when David sees her for the first time, he describes her:

> My aunt was a tall, hard-featured lady, but by no means ill-looking. There was an inflexibility in her face, in her voice, in her gait and carriage, amply sufficient to account for the effect she had made upon a gentle creature like my mother; but her features were rather handsome than otherwise, though unbending and austere. I particularly noticed that she had a very quick, bright eye. Her hair, which was grey, was arranged in two plain divisions, under what I believe would be called a mob-cap; I mean a cap,

> much more common then than now, with side-pieces fastening under the chin. Her dress was of a lavender colour, and perfectly neat; but scantily made, as if she desired to be as little encumbered as possible. I remember that I thought it, in form, more like a riding-habit with the superfluous skirt cut off, than anything else. She wore at her side a gentleman's gold watch, if I might judge from its size and make, with an appropriate chain and seals; she had some linen at her throat not unlike a shirt-collar, and things at her wrists like little shirt-wristbands. (186)

The family story is that Betsey was married to a younger man who beat her. Betsey pays him off and separates from him, by "mutual consent." He goes to India, and she resumes her maiden name of Trotwood and retires to the coast (12-3). The rumors that he died in India reach the family, but no one knows how Betsey took the news; he was out of contact.

Her bad marriage and the abuse she suffered left Betsey with a view that marriage is unnecessary, that girls should be protected, and that husbands are worthless. On page 187, David narrates that her housemaid is "one of a series of protégées whom my aunt had taken into her service expressly to educate in a renouncement of mankind." Chapter 13, page 189 displays her attitude on marriage:

> "Whatever possessed that poor unfortunate Baby, that she must go and be married again," said my aunt, when I had finished, "I can't conceive."
>
> [. . .] "Perhaps," Mr. Dick simpered, after thinking a little, "she did it for pleasure."
>
> "Pleasure, indeed!" replied my aunt. "A mighty pleasure for the poor Baby to fix her simple faith upon any dog of a fellow, certain to ill-use her in some way or other. What did she propose to herself, I should like to know! She had had one husband. She had seen David Copperfield out of the world, who was always running after wax dolls from his cradle. She had got a baby - oh, there were a pair of babies when she gave birth to this child sitting here, that Friday night! - and what more did she want?"

After continuing a bit longer, she launches on the notion of David's nurse, Peggotty, marrying. "Because she has not seen enough of the evil attending such things, she goes and gets married next" (190). Betsey creates this hardened misanthropic nature to protect herself, a direct result of the abuse she suffered while married. In encounters with people deserving of sympathy, Betsey does care but her character, her persona, will not allow her to show it openly.

Betsey has Mr. Dick living with her. Their friendship is based in admiration and respect, and they are sympathetic to each other. Betsey took him to live with her rather than have his family institutionalize him when

it was clear that they no longer wanted to care for him. He is a trusted advisor, and consults him in important matters, convinced that he is sound.

> [. . .] "(H)ow can you pretend to be wool-gathering, Dick, when you are as sharp as a surgeon's lancet? Now, here you see young David Copperfield, and the question I put to you is, what shall I do with him?"
>
> "What shall you do with him?" said Mr Dick, feebly, scratching his head. "Oh! do with him?"
>
> "Yes," said my aunt, with a grave look, and her forefinger held up. "Come! I want some very sound advice."
>
> "Why, if I was you," said Mr Dick, considering, and looking vacantly at me, "I should -" The contemplation of me seemed to inspire him with a sudden idea, and he added, briskly, "I should wash him!"
>
> "Janet," said my aunt, turning round with a quiet triumph, which I did not then understand, "Mr Dick sets us all right. Heat the bath!" (186)

She introduces him, at one point, as "(a)n old and intimate friend. On whose judgment [. . .] I rely" (200). She appears to be firm with him when he begins to lapse into foolishness, but it is clear that she respects and trusts him. Because of this kindness and respect, Mr. Dick works to please her. After Betsey loses her property, Mr. Dick takes a job as a copier and saves all of his money for her. Her interest in Mr. Dick's well-being is simple compassion

and she cares for him as a member of her family. Although she is aware of his eccentricities, novelty is never an issue.

Mr. Dick has his moment to shine in chapter 45 when he realizes that there is a divide between Annie and Doctor Strong. He learns that the situation is too delicate for David or for Betsey to interfere. Embracing the fact that he is not expected to follow propriety because of his mental weakness, Mr. Dick decides to bring the couple together himself.

The successful communication between Annie and Doctor Strong easily resolves the distance that had lain between them. Their marriage is an unconventional one, but this scene shows that their motivations truly are for the other's happiness. Mr. Dick is instrumental in bringing them together, but they reunite because their sympathies are mutual; they only want happiness for each other. Unlike the simple, uncomplicated romance in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Annie and Doctor Strong apparently have everything against them: there is a vast age difference; her mother is meddling; and well-meaning friends of Doctor Strong spark suspicion and doubts. However, their

relationship is a successful one because they learn to speak from the heart and meet each other's needs.

Mr. Dick completely affirms Betsey's faith in him. "Nobody knows what that man's mind is, except myself" (197) she says to David when he is a young boy. She repeats it in chapter 45 after he helps the Strongs. Mr. Dick is a valued and trusted friend.

Betsey is a complicated figure when it comes to her interactions with others. In most instances, the image she projects is not aligned with her true motivations. In the opening chapter, Betsey arrives at her late nephew's home and announces that she will care for and become the patron of her grand-niece. Betsey expects and wants a grand-niece, and initially intends to care for her, protecting her from the type of male brutality experienced in Betsey's own past. When her niece turns out to be a nephew, Betsey mistakenly believes that he does not need protection.

Clara, David's mother, tells him about a time when she thought she received some kindness and tenderness from Betsey:

> In a short pause which ensued, she had a fancy that she felt Miss Betsey touch her hair, and that with no ungentle hand; but, looking at her, in her timid hope, she found that lady sitting with the skirt of her dress tucked up, her hands

> folded on one knee, and her feet upon the fender, frowning at the fire. (14)

Clara believes this gentle touch happened, and tells her son about it. When young David arrives in Aunt Betsey's house to seek refuge, he experiences a similar event:

> It might have been a dream, originating in the fancy which had occupied my mind so long, but I awoke with the impression that my aunt had come and bent over me, and had put my hair away from my face, and laid my head more comfortably, and had then stood looking at me. The words, "Pretty fellow," or "Poor fellow," seemed to be in my ears, too; but certainly there was nothing else, when I awoke, to lead me to believe that they had been uttered by my aunt [. . .]. (189)

David believes this tenderness occurred, and it makes him more confident in his reliance on his aunt.

When young David appears before her, and with a little time to think after her initial shock, Betsey comes to realize that this boy has suffered in a way that she hoped his sister would not. She sees her folly and resolves to care for him. Her motivations may have originally been rooted in self-interest, but when she meets her nephew and realizes that the need for protection is not gender specific, she exhibits true sympathy for the boy. The initial reaction is overcome and replaced when she shows her love and sympathy for David in her actions.

She determines that the best thing for David is to have him live with her, and motivated only by his happiness and success, she decides to send him to school "to make the child happy and useful" (211). She loves and cares for David as a child, and remains close with him when he becomes an adult.

During David's first marriage, after he asks her to speak to his wife and advise her on how to keep house, she refuses poignantly.

> "I look back on my life, child," said my aunt, "and I think of some who are in their graves, with whom I might have been on kinder terms. If I judged harshly of other people's mistakes in marriage, it may have been because I had bitter reason to judge harshly of my own. Let that pass. I have been a grumpy, frumpy, wayward sort of a woman, a good many years. I am still, and I always shall be. But you and I have done one another some good, Trot, - at all events, you have done me good, my dear; and division must not come between us, at this time of day."
>
> "Division between us!" cried I.
>
> "Child, child!" said my aunt, smoothing her dress, "how soon it might come between us, or how unhappy I might make our Little Blossom, if I meddled in anything, a prophet couldn't say. I want our pet to like me, and be as gay as a butterfly. Remember your own home, in that second marriage; and never do both me and her the injury you have hinted at!"

> I comprehended, at once, that my aunt was right; and I comprehended the full extent of her generous feeling towards my dear wife. (588-9)

Her relationship with David, no matter how it started, has resulted in a mutually sympathetic and truly solid bond.

In spite of the beneficial influences in his life, Young David Copperfield did not make wise choices in love. After a few youthful crushes that end in heartbreak, he meets and is enraptured by Miss Dora Spenlow, his boss's daughter. When he first sees Dora, he is completely smitten by her:

> "Mr. Copperfield, my daughter Dora, and my daughter Dora's confidential friend!" It was, no doubt, Mr. Spenlow's voice, but I didn't know it, and I didn't care whose it was. All was over in a moment. I had fulfilled my destiny. I was a captive and a slave. I loved Dora Spenlow to distraction!
>
> She was more than human to me. She was a Fairy, a Sylph, I don't know what she was - anything that no one ever saw, and everything that everybody ever wanted. I was swallowed up in an abyss of love in an instant. There was no pausing on the brink; no looking down, or looking back; I was gone, headlong, before I had sense to say a word to her. (362)

David's attraction to her is complete and total, and it is entirely physical. His yearning for her is so strong and passionate, he is consumed solely with the desire to have

her. During the passage when he proposes to Dora, David confesses that

> I had loved her every minute, day and night, since I first saw her. I loved her at that minute to distraction. (451)

Unfortunately, there is no mutual basis for their relationship beyond physical attraction.

A successful relationship can surely develop out of this initial spark, regardless of whether the spark is curiosity or infatuation. However, it cannot end there and reside only in infatuation. When Steerforth loses that spark with Emily, he leaves because they shared nothing beyond initial infatuation. Dick Swiveller and The Marchioness, in contrast, develop mutual compassion and concern for each other. Their initial curiosity developed and progressed to form a solid foundation. David's courtship and marriage to Dora is founded solely on that physical spark. With "the romance of [their] engagement put away upon a shelf, to rust" (585), David begins to realize the error of "the first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart" (610), yet it is too late. He resolves to make the best of it, but harbors "secret feelings" (706) about their unsuitability.

As husband and wife, Dora and David do not experience successful meaningful communication. If conversation patterns indicate more about the quality of a relationship than logical, rational communication (Vande Kieft 325), then it is clear that their marriage is troubled. Their first "little quarrel" (586) begins in chapter 44 when David tries to convince Dora that she needs to speak with their servant, a terrible housekeeper. Dora overreacts and launches into an emotional fit, accusing David of being mean, making ungrateful speeches, and implying that she is a failure.

> But I had wounded Dora's soft little heart, and she was not to be comforted. She was so pathetic in her sobbing and bewailing, that I felt as if I had said I don't know what to hurt her. I was obliged to hurry away; I was kept out late; and I felt all night such pangs of remorse as made me miserable. I had the conscience of an assassin, and was haunted by a vague sense of enormous wickedness. (588)

When David returns from the debates, he finds his aunt waiting for him:

> "Little Blossom has been rather out of spirits, and I have been keeping her company." [. . .]
>
> "I assure you, aunt," said I, "I have been quite unhappy myself all night, to think of Dora's being so. But I had no other intention than to speak to her tenderly and lovingly about our home-affairs."

> [. . .] "Little Blossom is a very tender little blossom, and the wind must be gentle with her."
>
> I thanked my good aunt, in my heart, for her tenderness towards my wife; and I was sure that she knew I did. (588)

David becomes afraid of saying the wrong thing, and as a result, their household sinks further into domestic chaos. Their conversations become mutual attempts to not anger or upset the other, and their own individual needs are not met.

David and Dora fail at their attempts to communicate. They may adore each other, but that is not enough to make their relationship successful. In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, we see a successful relationship with Little Nell and Grandfather Trent. Their motivations are for each other, and their relationship is based in genuine love. As Dickens matures as a writer, he shows in *David Copperfield* that even though the feelings Dora and David have for each other are genuine, this does not make their relationship an automatic success. Their relationship never grows beyond the initial feelings that brought them together in the first place.

Dora tries to please David, but she fears reproach when she fails. Following his Aunt's initial advice, David attempts to teach her:

> "It will be your duty, and it will be your pleasure too - of course I know that; I am not delivering a lecture - to estimate her (as you chose her) by the qualities she has, and not by the qualities she may not have. The latter you must develop in her, if you can. And if you cannot, child," here my aunt rubbed her nose, "you must just accustom yourself to do without 'em. But remember, my dear, your future is between you two. No one can assist you; you are to work it out for yourselves. This is marriage, Trot; and Heaven bless you both, in it, for a pair of babes in the wood as you are!" (589)

The attempts are disastrous, and in fear of her emotions, he gives up. David resolves to keep her as she is, and Dora is happy. David, however, is not truly satisfied:

> The old unhappy feeling pervaded my life. It was deepened, if it were changed at all; but it was as undefined as ever, and addressed me like a strain of sorrowful music faintly heard in the night. I loved my wife dearly, and I was happy; but the happiness I had vaguely anticipated, once, was not the happiness I enjoyed, and there was always something wanting. (642)

On her deathbed, Dora's final words to David include a clear and mature assessment of their relationship:

> "I am afraid, dear, I was too young. I don't mean in years only, but in experience, and thoughts, and everything. I was such a silly little creature! I am afraid it would have been better, if we had only loved each other as a boy

> and girl, and forgotten it. I have begun to think I was not fit to be a wife."
>
> I try to stay my tears, and to reply, "Oh, Dora, love, as fit as I to be a husband!"
>
> "I don't know," with the old shake of her curls. "Perhaps! But if I had been more fit to be married I might have made you more so, too. Besides, you are very clever, and I never was."
>
> "We have been very happy, my sweet Dora."
>
> "I was very happy, very. But, as years went on, my dear boy would have wearied of his child-wife. She would have been less and less a companion for him. He would have been more and more sensible of what was wanting in his home. She wouldn't have improved. It is better as it is." (705)

Dora dies, in part, so the audience will love Little Blossom and grieve her death. Dickens deftly inspires sympathy for the dead wife and grieving widower, and sets David on the path to redeem his poor marriage choice and find true happiness. This marriage could not have ended in separation or resulted in a lifetime of ill-treatment, because the audience would lose compassion for the title character. The best thing Dora did for David was to die. Her prediction of what their marriage would evolve into never has to pass, and David has the opportunity to learn from this and to discipline his heart.

David has one successful romantic relationship, and it is successful precisely because it does not begin passionately. He meets Agnes Wakefield when his aunt sends him to lodge at Agnes's father's home while attending school.

> Although her face was quite bright and happy, there was a tranquillity about it, and about her - a quiet, good, calm spirit - that I never have forgotten; that I shall never forget.
>
> [. . .] I cannot call to mind where or when, in my childhood, I had seen a stained glass window in a church. Nor do I recollect its subject. But I know that when I saw her turn round, in the grave light of the old staircase, and wait for us, above, I thought of that window; and I associated something of its tranquil brightness with Agnes Wickfield ever afterwards. (213)

This scene is much more complex than the initial meetings in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. David feels something more solid here, a deeper connection than the sudden infatuation he felt with Dora. It is later in the story, in chapter 61, where David is able to recognize what it is that made such an impression on him all those years ago.

> "Do you know, what I have heard tonight, Agnes," said I, "strangely seems to be a part of the feeling with which I regarded you when I saw you first - with which I sat beside you in my rough school-days?"
>
> "You knew I had no mother," she replied with a smile, "and felt kindly towards me."

> "More than that, Agnes, I knew, almost as if I had known this story, that there was something inexplicably gentle and softened, surrounding you; something that might have been sorrowful in someone else (as I can now understand it was), but was not so in you."
>
> [. . .]"Will you laugh at my cherishing such fancies, Agnes?"
>
> "No!"
>
> "Or at my saying that I really believe I felt, even then, that you could be faithfully affectionate against all discouragement, and never cease to be so, until you ceased to live? - Will you laugh at such a dream?" (775)

This relationship is healthier and more solid from the start than his previous romantic relationships. Because he loved Agnes as a sister, there is no infatuation or curiosity; there is nothing but genuine warmth of feeling. Agnes is never viewed as a child. She and David are quite young when they meet, but she is her father's caretaker and his "little housekeeper" (213). Young David, only moments before meeting her, saw a portrait of her mother; when he sees Agnes for the first time, he immediately notices the resemblance. In his mind, she is the maternal force of that household.

From the start, Agnes is not a romantic figure to David, but a maternal influence as she becomes his

confidant and friend. He realizes in chapter 25 that she is the positive influence in his life, his "good Angel" (342), and that Steerforth, at least in Agnes's opinion, is his bad angel. These two influences are in conflict with each other, but the thought of Agnes as his good angel never leaves his mind.

Dora is a child-bride, just like David's mother ("'Why, bless my heart!' exclaimed Miss Betsey. 'You are a very Baby!'" [14]). Dora and Clara both die of the same cause, and both are loved and protected, but never treated as intellectual equals to their husbands. Each woman is prevented from parenting; before Clara re-marries, Pegotty acts the role of mother to David. Later, Murdstone prevents Clara from mothering her eldest son and death prevents her from mothering her youngest. Dora never has the opportunity to be a mother; she dies before she has children of her own. In fact, Murdstone treats Clara like a child, and David parents Dora. Agnes, on the other hand, is never viewed as a person needing protection. As a child, she mothers her father, and as an adult, she is able to be a mother to her own children with David.

Treated as at least an equal from the start, and at times somewhat as an older sister, she and David form their

friendship without distraction. As a result, they develop a mutually sympathetic and beneficial relationship. This friendship is the foundation for their successful marriage.

After Dora's death, David travels to Europe and returns knowing he loves Agnes. Their love comes together when she confesses that she has loved him her entire life. David's successful friendship with Agnes spans life from childhood through adulthood. Their relationship thrives because, from the start, they truly cared for each other; there was no basis in fancy or curiosity. Although it was Agnes's physical appearance that initially caught his attention, they progressed beyond the first impression and developed a mutually sympathetic and completely solid friendship.

The relationships in *David Copperfield* are most certainly of a different and more complex nature than those in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Characters still develop relationships based on initial appearances, but in *David Copperfield*, this has evolved. If the initial appearance does not develop beyond curiosity or infatuation (e.g. Dora and David, Steerforth and Emily), then the relationship fails. If a foundation develops beyond that initial

physical spark (e.g. David and Agnes), the relationship succeeds.

Another advancement in *David Copperfield* is the treatment of selfish motivation. The motivations for one character helping another can be rooted in personal experiences that have no relation whatsoever to the object of care (e.g. Betsey and her anticipated grand-niece). The key is that mutual sympathy must ultimately develop for there to be success. Dickens no longer presents his characters with single motivating factors; his primary characters have become multi-dimensional. However, when a pairing is based in real sympathy or develops a true mutual understanding, the relationship still succeeds. Dickens retains this pattern.

CHAPTER 4: *GREAT EXPECTATIONS*

> All other swindlers upon earth are nothing to the self-swindlers, and with such pretences did I cheat myself.
>
> — Philip Pirrip

Great Expectations, written late in Charles Dickens's career, presents a much more intricate view of relationships than that shown in *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *David Copperfield*. As his life grew more complicated, so too Dickens's writings. Phillip Allingham suggests that Dickens "seems to be inviting his readers to connect the author and the narrator" ("Genres" 3). His reading public "imagined him the model *pater familias*," while in reality he was separated from his wife and likely having an affair with Ellen Ternan (Allingham, "Biographical Context" 1). As Phillip Collins notes, *Great Expectations* deals significantly with a "disappointed lover" and with "a passionate and frustrated love" (1998).

Sympathy and curiosity are still prime motivators, but the individual characters' complexities blur even the purest of relationships. One's experience and personal

feelings influence character interaction more than before. We caught a glimpse of this with Betsey Trotwood in *David Copperfield*, where her marriage greatly influenced her motivations for protecting her anticipated niece. With *Great Expectations*, Dickens takes this to a new level of complexity. Joe and Pip may be "ever the best of friends" (48, 141, 468, 472), but Pip is increasingly embarrassed by Joe's common ways.

Another advancement is the focus on infatuation evolving into genuine love, and the emotional effect that a love not returned has on a character. Pip loves Estella, but his love for her is not rooted in a sympathetic sentiment. Like young David Copperfield, he is captivated by her beauty and creates a fantasy of their compatibility. But unlike David's attraction to Dora, Pip's affection for Estella is not returned. Pip's unrequited love for Estella, and his inability to rectify his aspirations with his conscience creates an inner turmoil unlike anything experienced by the characters in *David Copperfield* or in *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

The characters themselves in *Great Expectations* are significantly more intricate. As Brian Rosenberg states, the characters in Dickens's mature novels have "divided

personalities" and "problematic relations" (148). Pip is torn, for example, between his ambitions and his true self. In chapter 28, en route to a visit home, Pip convinces himself that it would be better to stay in public lodgings than it would be to stay with his family:

> All other swindlers upon earth are nothing to the self-swindlers, and with such pretences did I cheat myself. (225)

Clearly conflicted, Pip knows he is doing the wrong thing but does nothing to change. Although the simple character types and clear motivations from 1841 are considerably more complex twenty years later, the basic motivators of sympathy or curiosity still drive their relationships, and the successes and failures of these relationships are a result of these basic elements.

The most prominent relationship in *Great Expectations* is that of Pip and Estella. Allingham writes that *Great Expectations* is a romance which

> subordinates realism to emotion, and offers intensely personal rather than rational or objective responses. Pip's hopeless obsession with Estella ripples all the way throughout *Great Expectations*, and is in fact his chief motivation for becoming a "gentleman." ("Genres" 2)

For a large part of the story, Pip refuses to accept that he is not destined for a life with Estella. His emotions

drive him forward, and his rational mind does not prevail. From the first moment Pip sees her, he is struck and filled with awe:

> Though she called me "boy" so often, and with a carelessness that was far from complimentary, she was of about my own age. She seemed much older than I, of course, being a girl, and beautiful and self-possessed; and she was as scornful of me as if she had been one-and-twenty, and a queen. (56)

When Pip visits Satis House for the first time in chapter 8, his entire view of himself and his upbringing is forever changed as he learns to feel shame for his social inferiority. Estella, when directed to play with him, makes the first of many comments that will forever alter Pip's view of himself:

> "With this boy? Why, he is a common labouring-boy! [. . .] He calls the knaves, Jacks, this boy!" said Estella with disdain, before our first game was out. "And what coarse hands he has! And what thick boots!"
>
> I had never thought of being ashamed of my hands before; but I began to consider them a very indifferent pair. Her contempt for me was so strong, that it became infectious, and I caught it. (60)

These feelings of shame are reinforced as he has time to reflect on his way home. "They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now" (62).

As Pip spends time at Satis House, he falls in love with Estella. She never encourages him; as children, she only shows contempt for him. Each subsequent visit leaves him further scorned by Estella and deeper in love. She is frozen and uncaring, yet Pip believes that Miss Havisham's money will make him a gentleman fit for Estella and they will eventually be married. Miss Havisham's unsuccessful engagement in her youth has left her with a misplaced sense of vengeance, and Pip is caught in the crossfire. Her goal was to create a man-breaker in Estella. Miss Havisham's only focus was on Estella; she neglected to realize just how deeply Pip would be hurt.

> Estella was always about, and always let me in and out, but never told me I might kiss her again. Sometimes, she would coldly tolerate me; sometimes, she would condescend to me; sometimes, she would be quite familiar with me; sometimes, she would tell me energetically that she hated me. Miss Havisham would often ask me in a whisper, or when we were alone, "Does she grow prettier and prettier, Pip?" And when I said yes (for indeed she did), would seem to enjoy it greedily. Also, when we played at cards Miss Havisham would look on, with a miserly relish of Estella's moods, whatever they were. And sometimes, when her moods were so many and so contradictory of one another that I was puzzled what to say or do, Miss Havisham would embrace her with lavish fondness, murmuring something in her ear that sounded like "Break their hearts my pride and hope, break their hearts and have no mercy!" (95)

In chapter 17, while conversing with Biddy, Pip articulates for the first time that he wants to be a gentleman and is unhappy with his life at the forge.

> Dissatisfied, and uncomfortable, and - what would it signify to me, being coarse and common, if nobody had told me so!
>
> [. . .] "It was neither a very true nor a very polite thing to say," she remarked, directing her eyes to the ships again. "Who said it?"
>
> I was disconcerted, for I had broken away without quite seeing where I was going to. It was not to be shuffled off now, however, and I answered, "The beautiful young lady at Miss Havisham's, and she's more beautiful than anybody ever was, and I admire her dreadfully, and I want to be a gentleman on her account." (128-9)

Pip's motivations for becoming a gentleman and his shame at his upbringing are tied up in Estella. Pip realizes his folly, but he cannot help loving her.

Pip first notices Estella because she is novel and strange, and as Bernadette Vergara states, initially

> her image and her character are bound up so tightly with status symbols and Pip's own desire to rise that she is more of a symbol of a superior social status than a figure of romantic love. (1)

Pip does love Estella, and it comes from the initial physical attraction he felt as a young boy. She becomes a symbol to him at first, but his love for her is real. No

mutually sympathetic relationship evolves, however, and Estella never returns his love, stating that she is unable.

> "You must know," said Estella, condescending to me as a brilliant and beautiful woman might, "that I have no heart, — if that has anything to do with my memory." (237)

If we look at Ruth Vande Kieft's notion of successful communication, where the "needs and intents of the human heart have been received by and conveyed to others" (334), it is clear that successful communication does not exist between Pip and Estella. If each individual's emotional needs and intents are met, then a successful pairing occurs. Estella clearly does not meet Pip's needs, and she is chillingly self-sufficient, leaving no needs of her own for Pip to meet. There is no mutual sympathy, and no successful pairing.

The fault does not lie solely with Estella; Pip does not sympathize with her for the majority of the text. He chooses simply to not believe her when she is plain about her feelings. He willfully ignores her needs and prevents true communication because of his obsession. Estella does not love him back, and Pip refuses to believe her or listen to her when she says that she is incapable of love (and incapable of loving him). He blocks their relationship as

much as she does; there is no mutual sympathy on either side.

Pip maintains hope for a future with her in spite of several rebukes. One such example comes when Pip visits Estella at Mrs. Brandley's house in Richmond:

> "Pip, Pip," she said one evening, coming to such a check, when we sat apart at a darkening window of the house in Richmond; "will you never take warning?"
>
> "Of what?"
>
> "Of me."
>
> "Warning not to be attracted by you, do you mean, Estella?"
>
> "Do I mean! If you don't know what I mean, you are blind."
>
> I should have replied that Love was commonly reputed blind, but for the reason that I always was restrained - and this was not the least of my miseries - by a feeling that it was ungenerous to press myself upon her, when she knew that she could not choose but obey Miss Havisham. My dread always was, that this knowledge on her part laid me under a heavy disadvantage with her pride, and made me the subject of a rebellious struggle in her bosom.
>
> "At any rate," said I, "I have no warning given me just now, for you wrote to me to come to you, this time."
>
> "That's true," said Estella, with a cold careless smile that always chilled me. (301)

Pip believes still that Miss Havisham will order Estella to be his wife, even when Estella makes no illusion of her feelings. She is quite plain with him and has no interest in sparing his feelings, but he refuses to accept or see it. He has deluded himself. After Pip learns that his benefactor was not Miss Havisham, and with that realizes that Estella is not reserved for him, he visits them both at Satis House to speak with them. Pip presents himself to Estella, and she flatly turns him down while announcing her engagement. She is incapable of feeling emotion, and is unable to sympathize with him.

In chapter 51, Pip reveals his suspicions regarding Estella's parentage. Rather than seek emotional revenge for Estella's rebuke of him, he chooses to keep the information a secret and protects Estella from Drummle's scorn and violence. Pip does what he thinks is best for her, but in doing so, prevents the prime opportunity for her character to grow beyond its bounds. Pip has the chance to grow and evolve, and begins to do so with Magwich's return. Estella, however, does not get this chance. Pip's sympathy for Estella, in this case, is damaging. Dickens's treatment of sympathy here is a far cry from this treatment of Adam Smith's theories in *The Old*

Curiosity Shop and even in *David Copperfield*. However, it is undeniable that Pip's urge to protect Estella from someone else's actions results in a missed opportunity for her to grow.

This relationship of Pip and Estella, inspired by curiosity and based on illusion, does not succeed. The original ending as published in the monthly numbers left Pip alone, with no one to marry (much to the displeasure of Dickens's audience):

> I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so, the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw the shadow of no parting from her. (484)

But even when Dickens revised the manuscript for the single volume publication in 1862, he leaves the ending still ambiguous: "I saw no shadow of another parting from her" (507). Their status is still unclear, even though Estella is now a widow and eligible for remarriage. In good faith, Dickens cannot have this story end in a traditional Victorian wedding for his main character. Miss Havisham created an Estella who is "stock and stone" with a "cold, cold heart" (304). At the end of the story, she's "bent

and broken" (484), but unable to be reborn, yet Dickens allows Pip to change and grow. Estella says that Pip has always had a heart - his experiences and maturity enables him to recognize his true values. Through his experiences with Magwich, his friendship with Herbert, and his realization that Joe and Biddy truly belong together.

In spite of his growth, Pip never has the opportunity for his love develop beyond the initial foundation of curiosity. Estella is incapable of growth, and she simply does not love him. Real love can certainly exist without the relationship being successful (e.g. David and Dora), but the real love in *Great Expectations* is not mutual. Pip's unrequited love for Estella never really resolves, and there is no happy ending. Estella is an unattainable goal, yet Pip continues to torture himself.

Pip and Magwich exhibit another complex relationship in *Great Expectations*. Initially, a desperate convict terrorizes young Pip, choosing him simply out of convenience. There is no initial sense of curiosity or of sympathy; Pip only helps Magwich out of a child's fear. "'O! Don't cut my throat, sir,' I pleaded in terror. 'Pray don't do it, sir'" (4). Pip is terrorized into

compliance, but a young boy's curiosity leaves him wondering about this man.

Their second meeting goes a little differently. Young Pip brings him food, and, as Magwich greedily devours this meal, Pip's view begins to change:

> Pitying his desolation, and watching him as he gradually settled down upon the pie, I made bold to say, "I'm glad you enjoy it." (19)

Pip's curiosity overpowers his fear as he begins to pity the convict. He has not yet reached the level of Adam Smith's discussion of pity, the ability to "conceiv(e) what we ourselves should feel in the like situation" (I.i.I.2), but is able to recognize the convict is in need of compassion. Pip becomes more curious as his fears dissipate. He thinks of Magwich as "my convict," (36) rather than "the man." When Magwich returns at the end of volume two, he is still, to Pip, "my convict."

Magwich's actions from the time he is transported to Australia until he returns to England are motivated entirely by gratitude, curiosity, and love. He is eternally grateful to Pip for (as Magwich interpreted it) showing him kindness. He lives a life of self-sacrifice, anonymously sending all his earnings to Pip. It is not in

Magwich's self-interest to come back to England; the penalty, if caught, is death. Yet it is pure curiosity that motivates him to risk his life and return. He needs to see what his benefaction has accomplished and to see the gentleman he created. Over the years, Magwich has come to think of Pip as a son in the sense that he created Gentleman Pip.

> Look'ee here, Pip. I'm your second father. You're my son – more to me nor any son. (320)

Once again, Pip is involved in a relationship where there is genuine love from one party, yet this love is not mutual. In this case, it is Magwich who loves Pip and wants the best for him, yet Pip does not return these feelings until later.

Pip is 23 years old when Magwich reappears. He is living the life of a gentleman, firm in the belief that Miss Havisham is his benefactor and that Estella is promised to him. Magwich's return crushes Pip when he realizes the truth of his expectations. Pip's feelings in this passage vary, swinging from one emotion to the next. He runs from loneliness to fear when he imagines his sister's ghost, foreshadowing the appearance of another ghost from his past. He feels mild annoyance and feigns an

air of authority when the stranger imposes his presence, but is soon "softened by the softened aspect of the man, and felt a touch of reproach" (317). Pip shows graciousness and they converse, and then Magwich reveals that he is Pip's benefactor.

> The abhorrence in which I held the man, the dread I had of him, the repugnance with which I shrank from him, could not have been exceeded if he had been some terrible beast. (320)

Pip's initial surprise at seeing his convict again after all this time gives way to the overwhelming realization that his expectations are false. Pip's benefactor is not a wealthy old lady with a young ward saved for his bride, but a convict. During the Marsh chase Joe may have set the example of sympathy for a man's plight, but at this moment, Pip only grasps the social disaster of this situation.

> All the truth of my position came flashing on me; and its disappointments, dangers, disgraces, consequences of all kinds, rushed in in such a multitude that I was borne down by them and had to struggle for every breath I drew.
>
> [. . .] I could not have spoken one word, though it had been to save my life. I stood, with a hand on the chair-back and a hand on my breast, where I seemed to be suffocating,—I stood so, looking wildly at him, until I grasped at the chair, when the room began to surge and turn. He caught me, drew me to the sofa, put me up against the cushions, and bent on one knee before me, bringing the face that I now well

> remembered, and that I shuddered at, very near to mine. (320)

Pip realizes and articulates that he would have been better off at the forge. Since shortly after he first met Estella and decided that he would become a gentleman, Pip believed that he deserved a better life than the simple one offered to him through a life at the forge. With the re-emergence of Magwich, and the realization that he is not the gentleman he believed he had become, Pip is at a loss.

> [. . .] The wretched man, after loading wretched me with is gold and silver chains for years, had risked his life to come to me, and I held it there in my keeping! If I had loved him instead of abhorring him, if I had been attracted to him by the strongest admiration and affection, instead of shrinking from him with strongest repugnance; it could have been no worse. On the contrary, it would have been better, for his preservation would then have naturally and tenderly addressed my heart. (323)

The monster Pip abhorred only moments before, in fact, is his adoptive father; he is the son, and Magwich is his creator.

Magwich's motivations for transforming Pip are complicated. Initially, he desires to provide for the boy who provided for him. He sees this as repaying a debt, an action of reciprocity. As Magwich continues to explain, we begin to see that his motivations had shifted.

> And then, dear boy, it was a recompense to me, look'ee here, to know in secret that I was making a gentleman. The blood horses of them colonists might fling up the dust over me as I was walking; what do I say? I says to myself, "I'm making a better gentleman nor ever you'll be!" When one of 'em says to another, "He was a convict, a few year ago, and is a ignorant common fellow now, for all he's lucky," what do I say? I says to myself, "If I ain't a gentleman, nor yet ain't got no learning, I'm the owner of such. All on you owns stock and land; which on you owns a brought-up London gentleman?" (321)

Magwich wants to make Pip better than the upper class, and in effect, elevate himself by association. There is no longer anything altruistic in these actions.

Magwich transforms from an animal/convict to a successful sheepherder in Australia. He comes back to England and is transformed again by his love for Pip. Throughout Magwich's stay in London, he exhibits great affection for Pip. His initial curiosity at his creation has grown into a sort of pride-based love. Pip's feelings, however, do not begin to alter until the effort to get Magwich out of England. What had started as revulsion at the identity of his patron, and a failure to be grateful for the kindness bestowed upon him, develops first into care and compassion for a wretched creature, and ultimately into love. Their relationship transforms into one that is

mutually sympathetic. Pip ultimately puts Magwich's needs above his own, caring only for his comfort.

Pip comes to sympathize with Magwich, which he does not realize until their attempts to get Magwich out of London fail, and Magwich is near death:

> For now, my repugnance to him had all melted away, and in the hunted wounded shackled creature who held my hand in his, I only saw a man who had meant to be my benefactor, and who had felt affectionately, gratefully, and generously, towards me with great constancy through a series of years. I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe. (446)

He returns Magwich's affection, genuinely cares for him, and puts Magwich's needs above his own. As Magwich lay dying, Pip is with him and offers comfort. Pip tells Magwich that his daughter is alive and leaves him with the impression that Pip will marry her. His only desire is to give Magwich comfort in his final moments, for he has come to love the man as one would love a father. Pip grows significantly because of this successful relationship.

Their relationship began and indeed progressed in an unsuccessful manner. For the large part of their time together, there were no mutual motivations. Magwich created Gentleman Pip in effort to be better vicariously than the upper classes. Pip tried to get Magwich out of

London lest he be discovered and sully his own reputation. Yet in the course of their relationship, they began to move and act with mutually sympathetic intents. When Pip returns Magwich's affections, their relationship becomes successful.

The purest relationship in *Great Expectations*, in spite of Pip's conflicts, is that of Pip and Joe. Joe loves Pip, simply and completely. When Pip is a boy in the early pages of the novel, Joe is Pip's fatherly protector, yet they are "ever the best of friends" (48, 141, 468, 472). Joe protects him as best as he can from Mrs. Joe and Tickler, plays games with him, and intends to apprentice him to the forge. As a child, Pip's love for Joe is just as pure and simple. Joe is, in all likelihood, his only friend in an otherwise difficult house. They care for each other and have a lasting bond.

Dickens gives a complex view of this otherwise simple relationship. Early in the novel a clear foundation is formed for Joe and Pip's friendship. Joe's motivations for Pip are pure and unclouded. His love for his nephew is complete, and his desire always is determined by what is best for the boy. Like Betsey Trotwood, Joe's motivations for protecting and caring for Pip are rooted in his own

past. In Chapter Seven we learn about Joe's childhood with an alcoholic and abusive father. His own childhood was hard, and so he desires to make Pip's more comfortable. When he invites Pip's sister to "come to the forge" (48), he says

> And bring the poor little child. God bless the poor little child. [. . .] There's room for *him* at the forge! (48)

Echoing Matthew 19:14 ("suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me"), Joe provides a home for Pip and his sister. Even though he clearly is marked by his own violent childhood, his motivations are truly sympathetic to them both. Joe plans to apprentice Pip to the forge when he is old enough, as providing Pip with a livelihood is the most secure future he can offer Pip.

As a child, Pip wants nothing more than to work beside Joe ("woT larX!" [45]). Yet, as Pip grows and experiences life outside of his home, he begins to become embarrassed of Joe and his simple nature. The core of Pip's love for Joe never changes, but it is clouded by his shame and embarrassment, and expectations of a life better than that at the forge. Pip lays his ignorance at Joe's feet. Estella derides things that Pip takes for granted, and he

begins to be ashamed of himself and his home. Joe is his only role model, so to a child's mind, Joe is to blame.

> I wished Joe had been rather more genteelly brought up, and then I should have been so too. (62)

As Pip spends more time at Satis House, and later begins to recognize his expectations, he becomes embarrassed by Joe's provinciality. As a result, when Pip moves to London, he has less and less contact with Joe. Pip feels remorse at times for his treatment of his friend, particularly in Chapter 27 when Joe comes to visit Pip in London and will only call him "Sir," not "Old Chap" like he used to. Joe, however, never shows anger or regret at Pip's change. If anything, Pip is a painful estrangement endured in the belief that this is what is best for the boy. As Pip becomes more of a gentleman, his relationship with Joe changes and becomes formal. To Joe, this saddens him, but it is the right thing to do. He wants to please Pip, and believes that this is proper.

After Magwich's death, and Pip takes ill, Joe comes to Pip's side. The sure sign of a true friend, and according to Adam Smith best example of a sympathetic relationship, is the desire to care for another person with the only

motivation being that person's well-being. Like the Marchioness, Joe comes to Pip's apartments and nurses him back to health. He stays as long as he thinks Pip needs him, and when Pip begins to recover, Joe leaves.

> Not wishful to intrude I have departured fur you are well again dear Pip and will do better without JO.
> P.S. Ever the best of friends. (472)

Sensitive to Pip's feelings, Joe is desirous of making Pip as happy and comfortable as possible. His primary concern is for Pip's health and well-being; this is all he ever cared about. He is aware that Pip has far exceeded him socially and is now part of a different world, but this does not matter to Joe. What he does not realize, because Pip failed to articulate it (and perhaps failed to recognize it in himself), is that Pip no longer is embarrassed by Joe, but rightfully sees Joe as being his better, not his inferior.

Pip was unable to recognize that his love for Joe is worth more than his ambition. At the end of the story, he realizes his values were misplaced. Pip is no longer torn between his expectations and his true self, and he has finally begun to understand what true value is. His relationship with Joe succeeds because of the mutual

sympathy they have for each other. Even though Pip's expectations cloud his actions, his feelings for Joe never waiver. This pure sympathetic relationship is the most successful in *Great Expectations*. Each character, ultimately, is only concerned for the other's happiness. The complexity of growth, change, expectations, and love only add to the strength of Joe and Pip's bond.

Pip's growth is multi-staged. At Magwich's arrest and death, Pip's growth and compassion makes their overall relationship successful. The next stage of his growth occurs during his illness and recovery, where he and Joe are able to push everything aside and return to their pure friendship. His final stage is his return to ask Biddy to marry him and the discovery that she plans to marry Joe. He has truly lost everything at this point, yet because of his happiness for them and the elevation of their feelings over his, Pip's growth in character is complete.

Unlike the characters from Dickens's earlier works, Pip does not get what a Victorian audience would expect for a happy ending. He grows as a person, becomes truly good, and is content playing the role of goodly uncle in Joe and Biddy's home. This is Pip's success. David got Agnes in the end because their love was mutual. Pip, from

childhood, set his heart on Estella. He still loves her, even though he knows that she will never love him. Pip's growth as a character is complete, but their love is not mutual and he does not win Estella's hand. However, Pip has found peace.

CONCLUSION

The three novels presented in this study provide a cross sectional analysis of Dickens's presentation and treatment of sympathy, and illustrate how a fundamental concept can begin with a simple presentation, but become complex over time. While the treatment of this concept changes drastically from 1841 - 1862, the core elements remain the same.

The Old Curiosity Shop provides the simplest view of character relationships. Curiosity is a passing fancy, and when it is the prime motivator, relationships will result in an unsuccessful pairing. Dickens will not allow these relationships to succeed because there is no foundation beyond fancy. Sympathy, on the other hand, is the purest motivator in this early work. If fellow feeling motivates one's actions, then the relationship succeeds.

The mutual sympathy and then love of Dick Swiveller for the Marchioness is pure and direct. The lust of Quilp for Little Nell is equally direct. In 1841, Dickens treats

these motivations quite plainly and with little complication. One pairing is rewarded, while the other is prevented.

In the middle of his career, specifically with *David Copperfield*, the relationships become complex. Initial curiosity can still develop into real love, but if that element of true mutual understanding is absent, the relationship will fail. In the pairing of Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness, sympathy replaces curiosity. If the initial reaction from a character is curiosity, that character can still become sympathetic to another character; the two motivations are not mutually exclusive. In the middle of his career, Dickens still addresses sympathy as a motivation, but it is less of a primary motivator. So long as the overall actions are rooted in fellow feeling, and so long as the other person's needs and wants are placed above one's own, then there is success.

By the end of Dickens's career, his presentation of the simple elements of sympathy and curiosity have taken on a highly complicated nature. The basic elements are still present in a kernel, but here we see that the growth of characters is the prime success or fail indicator for relationships. There is one character, Joe, whose

motivations are naturally pure and good. But for Pip, Magwich, and Estella, the status of their growth is vital to the analysis of sympathy and curiosity.

The simple and straightforward application of Adam Smith's theories is no longer sufficient by itself; a relationship that begins and progresses unsuccessfully may in fact become a success when mutual sympathy is reached. The majority of the relationship between Pip and Magwich runs in this manner; it is not until the very end of their time together that they reach true mutual sympathy. And still, if two characters do not reach a state of mutual sympathy, Dickens will prohibit the relationship's success. Estella and Pip never reach fellow feeling for one another, and at the end of the story, they do not end up together.

Charles Dickens naturally changed over his lifetime and writing career. At 29, he published a book that had a fairly simplistic view on relationships; sympathy equals success, curiosity equals failure. By the age of 50, this view naturally complicates as he matures and his own relationships became complicated. However, he still makes the same basic statement; we must have this simple element of sympathy, or there will be no chance for success.

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